News Release

Associate Professors Maiga and Westrom Publish Benefits of Service Learning at the U of M Crookston in NACTA Journal

By Elizabeth Tollefson on Tuesday, February 27, 2007

Crookston, Minn. (February 26, 2007) – Associate professors of agriculture at the University of Minnesota Crookston (UMC) Harouna Maiga, Ph.D., and Lyle Westrom, Ph.D., were recently published in the North American Colleges and Teachers of Agriculture (NACTA) Journal on how implementing service learning enhances the student experience on campus. Together, they detail how service learning has been integrated into the animal science curriculum.

Service learning is a two-way approach that brings classroom teaching and community needs together. Through the use of service learning in the animal science program in particular, students gain opportunities to apply classroom knowledge to agricultural settings, and farmers benefit from the service students provide. Service learning is a real-world, hands-on experience connecting the classroom with industry.

“Service learning is really a bridge between Universities and the communities the University serves,” says Maiga, who has taught at the University since 2001.

At UMC, many courses have a service-learning component. Fifty-two percent of UMC faculty members were involved in service learning projects last year alone totaling 10,838 hours of service. In addition, community members spent 6,520 hours on our campus involved in cooperative activities, a 7 percent increase from the prior year.

Maiga and Westrom have incorporated service learning into animal systems management, a capstone class taught by Maiga and dairy linear evaluation class taught by Westrom. Animal systems management is used to help local farmers better manage their farming operation. As a service-learning project, students completed a complete analysis of the farm to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) to the operation. Students make recommendations the farmers might consider to help improve the overall profitability and sustainability of their farms.

The dairy linear evaluation class has been taught for more than 15 years but started including the service-learning component in 2004. Dairy linear evaluation is a tool used by dairy producers to improve functional type. In this evaluation, students coded physiological traits such as stature, rear legs and fore udder attachment, as well as other traits between biological extremes. As a service-learning project, students observed while the Holstein Association Classifier coded the herd. Students then visited with the farm family about the standards they wished to use when deciding to breed or mate the herd; thereby, ensuring the best characteristics in the offspring. Westrom has taught animal science courses for 18 years at the Crookston campus.

To learn more about service learning at UMC, visit our website or call Assistant Director of Service Learning Lisa Loegering at 218-281-8526.

The University of Minnesota Crookston (UMC) delivers more than 25 different undergraduate degree programs, including online degrees, in agriculture; arts, humanities and social sciences; business; math, science and technology; and natural resources. UMC is dedicated to helping students and the region aim higher, reach further and dream big dreams. To learn more, visitwww.UMCrookston.edu.

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